

Barry X Ball
Sacristan
Medardo Rosso Project

In 2012, I worked with the Vicenza-based technical company, Unocad, to 3D-scan 39 Medardo Rosso sculptures in the following Italian public collections:

- Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna – Venezia
- Galleria d'Arte Moderna (GAM) – Milano
- Museo Medardo Rosso – Barzio

I also was granted access to Rosso sculptures in private collections. Examples of almost all of Medardo Rosso's mature works (and multiple versions of some pieces) were 3-dimensionally scanned. The technicians employed a state-of-the-art Breuckman white-light scanner to "capture" all sides, surfaces, and volumes of the Rossos. I concurrently took extensive digital photographs of the sculptures. Utilizing the digital photos as references, the scan data was subsequently painstakingly refined and "perfected" at my studio in New York. The resultant virtual models are highly-detailed objective "copies" of the Rossos, the most precise digital records of the late artist's works ever produced.

My goal from the beginning of this project has been to utilize this objective, scientific scan data as a starting point to create poetic new sculptures – sculptures that will retain all the power and mystery of Medardo Rosso's while introducing a panoply of subtle alterations that will profoundly transform them and make them decidedly *my* works – Barry X Ball originals.

My sculptures are CNC (computer-numerically-controlled) milled from various exotic translucent stones – Golden Honeycomb Calcite, pink Iranian onyx, white Iranian onyx, "wounded" Mexican onyx, ultra-translucent white Mexican onyx – by sophisticated robots. Medardo created his works *additively*, by building them up, molding them of wax, plaster, and clay. I have purposely done the opposite – *subtractively* realizing my sculptures, precisely hewing them from stone blocks. The transformation has reversed and bridged the classic

Rodin-versus-Michelangelo (modeling-versus-carving) sculpture division. The reversal is emphasized by the fact that my sculptures are “mirror images” of the Rossos.

My aims are to push Rosso’s famous diaphanous translucency to an extreme, to approach pure abstraction while still presenting the originals’ figurative elements, and to impart a transcendent glow to the soft forms. My golden calcite recalls Rosso’s soft yellow wax, my white onyx his plaster, but the extreme translucency of my chosen stones is far more luminous than Rosso’s materials. Some of my most delicate Rosso-esque sculptures – based on his thin bronzes – evince a hyper-compressed three-dimensionality. Some are so thin and translucent that the contours of their backs are visible through their fronts. The stone venation as well as the cultivated surface flutes of the robot milling – visually superimposed textural layers – work in concert with the sculptural forms to create a subtle, dizzyingly lush visual complexity.

My sculptures are presented on (and visually hover above) custom-made polished metal pedestals. The structure of those pedestals is reminiscent of traditional sculptor stands, the type Rosso often used in the process of creating his works. But, in keeping with the enhanced ethereality of my sculptures, my pedestals, although structurally strong, are hyper-delicate in appearance. Their crystalline white Vietnamese marble elements – panel and block – reflect light. My goal has been to reduce to a minimum the visual “weight” of the pedestals’ structures while contributing to the ethereality of the translucent sculptures they support. Light and levitation were the guiding design principles.

My recently-completed 20,000 square foot Brooklyn studio complex was built with a focus on the creation of stone sculptures. It is the most comprehensive advanced high-tech stone fabrication facility in the world. The Medardo Rosso Project is the first new body of sculptures to be realized in this studio. All the preparatory digital work, stone cutting, and final hand carving and polishing of my Rosso sculptures is being done there. For the multi-axis robot milling, I collaborate with a sophisticated company, also located in Brooklyn. The pedestals were fabricated by a studio-coordinated consortium of multiple outside fabricators, including the renowned Italian furniture manufacturer, Tecno.

The debut exhibition of my Medardo Rosso Project sculptures was at Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art in Venice during this year's Biennale d'Arte. *Sacristan* is the most recent work in this ongoing series. Realized in effusively-figured translucent "Wounded" Mexican onyx, this sculpture is inspired by Rosso's *Sagrestano* (Church Official) in the collection of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milano. The Rosso is a darkly-patinated thin bronze "façade" bolted to a rough, dark, sloping stone base block. In my piece, the sculpture and base block are monolithically carved from a unique piece of "Wounded" Mexican onyx, with the natural rough red rind of the stone forming its convoluted back side.